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SECURITY INFORMATION

Development
File
APR 8 1953

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

8 April 1953

SUBJECT: SE-42: CURRENT COMMUNIST TACTICS
(Draft for Board Consideration)

PROBLEM

To estimate the significance of current Communist "peace" tactics, and probable Communist courses of action in support of these tactics.

ESTIMATE

1. Since the announcement of the death of Stalin the various "peaceful" gestures and statements by the Soviet and Chinese Communist governments have followed so swiftly upon each other, and the evidence concerning relations among the men in the Kremlin has remained so obscure, that any estimate of the situation is apt to be out of date as soon as it is formulated. ~~Conclusions respecting the reasons for the apparent shift in Communist tactics, and forecasts of the probable future course of Soviet policy, can be no more than tentative.~~ This estimate is merely a brief presentation of provisional conclusions on

DOCUMENT NO. _____
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CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S(6) 1991
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DATE: 2 FEBR '81 REVIEWER: 018357

the subject as of the date, ^{present} of the paper. We are virtually certain that ~~it will soon have to be revised, in whole or in part, as additional evidence becomes available.~~

2. It is clear that there has been a change in Communist tactics. The number and nature of the recent acts of the Soviet and Chinese Communist governments, the prominence given them by the Communist press and radio, and the high authority of the Communist leaders involved, all demonstrate that ~~the manner of conducting Soviet foreign relations has altered, and perhaps the policy itself has changed.~~ For the time being the Communists have adopted a conciliatory approach in their dealings with the West.

3. It is also obvious that developments ^(which may be) of profound significance are occurring ⁱⁿ among the ~~police~~ of the USSR. We ^{are unable as yet to estimate} ~~do not know~~ the nature of these developments, and we believe that it would be premature at present ~~to attempt to estimate their nature.~~ It may be that the present Soviet government is united, securely entrenched in power, and has ^{agreed upon a} ~~policy~~ of policy radically different from that ^{followed} ~~held~~ by Stalin. There are indications, however, ^(which suggest) that an intense struggle for power ^{may be} ~~is~~ in progress in the Kremlin. If the latter is the case, ^{current Soviet tactics may proceed from the government's} ~~Soviet domestic and foreign policies will~~ weakness, and may fluctuate as one or another faction in the Kremlin ~~probably not follow a consistent and clear course, and may even fluctuate~~ gains temporary dominance, ~~between extremes of harshness and conciliation.~~

4. So far, however, the new Soviet tactics in foreign relations, and the moves of domestic policy made by the Soviet government, have

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followed a consistent line. They have shown no indication of divided authority or infirm purpose in the Kremlin. For the time being, therefore, we must proceed on the assumption that these acts do in fact represent a consistent new line ~~of policy~~, and that a "peace offensive" of major proportions is under way. Yet there is no evidence that the ultimate objectives of the Soviet rulers have changed, ~~or that they have hitherto been misunderstood in the West.~~ ^{posed by} The ~~potential~~ threat of Soviet armed forces remains as formidable as before. There is no basis for supposing that the menace of Communism to the free world has diminished, or that the fundamental hostility of the Kremlin to the West has abated. ^{There} ~~is~~ evidence that Communist tactics ^{which have changed} ~~which have changed~~, ^{There is no evidence that} ~~not~~ Communist aims ^{have changed} ~~have changed~~.

5. Broadly speaking, the changed tactics of the Communists ^{explanations:} admit of two reasonable but divergent interpretations. (1) The Kremlin may hope by a series of ~~superficial~~ ^{which involve no real} gestures, ~~involving no substantial~~ concessions, to weaken the political cohesion and military strength of the West, ~~and to postpone and confuse the decisions of the new US administration.~~ ^{and to gain time for the consolidation of the new regime in the USSR,} (2) The Kremlin may have decided that the harsh tactics

^{On the other hand} of Stalin have ceased to be profitable, and that the time has come to settle ^{many} ~~some of~~ the important outstanding issues between East and West. By such ^{a change} ~~a policy~~ the new Soviet government may hope not only to divide and weaken the West, but also to introduce an era of "peaceful coexistence" with all nations, ^{in the expectation that} ~~during which~~ the power of the Bloc ~~may~~ ^{will} grow ^{the} ~~be expanded~~ while the inevitable collapse of capitalist society ^{West will decay,} ~~is~~ confidently awaited.

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6. Though neither of the interpretations outlined above is inherently improbable, the evidence is not yet sufficient, in our judgment, to justify either. Tentatively, we believe that the Communists are now prepared to make the concessions on the POW issue necessary to reach an armistice in Korea, provided that ^{these concessions can be made} ~~this can be done~~ in such a manner as to conceal the Communist abandonment of principle. There are ambiguities in the Communist proposals for an armistice, however, and these ambiguities may conceal difficulties which may prevent the conclusion of an armistice. Moreover, we believe that ^{possibly} ~~either~~ in connection with the armistice negotiation, ^{and almost certainly} ~~or~~ in connection with the post-armistice negotiations for a Korean political settlement, the Communists will introduce proposals which the US will find it extremely difficult to accept but which the allies of the US will not be disposed to resist, especially in the midst of an era of good feeling engendered by the new Communist tactics,

7. The Soviets may make dramatic proposals

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allies of the United States be disposed to offer a stern resistance, especially in the midst of an era of good feeling engendered by the new Communist tactics.

8. ^(Specific indication) We see no evidence as yet, however, that the Communists are preparing to make major concessions on any other important issue than that of Korea. It is possible that the Soviets may make dramatic proposals for free elections in Germany, for withdrawal of occupation forces, and for reunification of the country. We believe that such proposals, if they are made, will contain conditions unacceptable to the West, and which the Kremlin will intend to be unacceptable to the West, because we do not believe that the Kremlin will give up its control over East Germany. Nevertheless, in the atmosphere induced by a successful armistice negotiation in Korea, any sweeping Communist proposals respecting Germany might have the effect of frustrating for a considerable time the EDC program and the rearmament of Western Germany.

8.9. Likewise it may be that the Soviets will make proposals for general disarmament, but we do not believe that their proposals, if made, will be possible of acceptance by the West.

9. ^{minor} There are many lesser concessions which the Kremlin might make, ^{many} and ^{which} several proposals that the West would find ^{it} difficult to refuse, ^(difficult to accept) and ~~embarrassing to accept. For example, the Soviet government might accede~~

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~~to the Tripartite Declaration of 1948 respecting Trieste. It might offer to conclude an Austrian treaty, involving the early withdrawal of all occupation forces. It might offer a peace treaty to Japan containing various attractive economic and territorial clauses. It might facilitate the departure of Jews from Eastern Europe and the USSR, for Palestine. It might settle its Lend-Lease obligations, and set Oatis and Sanders free. The Communists might even offer a peaceful settlement of the war in Indochina, on terms difficult alike to accept and to refuse.~~

→ The aim of ^{such} these maneuvers would ~~clearly~~ be to impair the political and military strength of the West, and to reap the greatest possible benefits from ^a ~~the~~ decision to end the Korean war. It has long been realized in the West that the West is in many respects more vulnerable to Communist gestures of peace and goodwill than to Communist violence and threats of war, and it has been difficult to understand why Stalin almost never tried such conciliatory tactics. Our present view is that the Kremlin is now adopting such tactics, and undertaking to create an atmosphere in which resistance to Communism and to Soviet imperialism will be at least temporarily weakened. How far the Kremlin may go and how long it may persist in these tactics cannot be judged without further evidence. Moreover, a correct interpretation of the change in Soviet procedures must await a fuller knowledge of the course of events within the Kremlin itself, and of the results of the struggle for power which may be taking place among the rulers of the USSR.

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